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### The Gardens | Edinburgh and La Géométrie Pratique

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(fig 1) Jane Hyslop, *Wild Plants Collected in Midlothian*, 2002, 17 x 26.5 x 2.5 cm, etched pages and screenprinted cover with slip-case, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jane Hyslop



(fig 2) Jane Hyslop, *The Formal Garden, Dalkeith*, 2013, 21 x 8 cm, digital prints on a selection of papers, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jane Hyslop

Jane Hyslop

### *Introduction*

In this article I will provide a brief introduction to the ethos of my work, the themes repeatedly explored and its context and then go on to describe *The Gardens | Edinburgh and La Géométrie Pratique*. These are two major projects that were made for exhibitions in Scotland in 2015.

### *An Overview*

I make images through drawing, painting, printmaking and photography and these predominately find their way out into the world inside the pages of books, gathered in folios or placed in bespoke boxes. The artist's book is a format that suits my purpose well. The book offers a recognised and established format that can be developed in challenging ways with boundaries to push against and puncture. Through my fascination in maps and diagrams I endeavour to convey information in visual form keeping text to a minimum. My goal is to make effective pieces of work that intrigue, engage and are pleasing to handle.

The ordering and paring back of content that the book demands is an exacting and useful rigour. As a book artist I have to make critical decisions when considering all aspects of each new work. What is the purpose of the book, is there a narrative, what order will be the most effective, what are the most important inclusions, what can be edited, what can be emphasised and how?

I appreciate simplicity of design and I reject complex or over-embellished solutions in the work. It is essential that each part of a book has purpose and relevance and it must function effectively and with a certain economy. Considerable time is involved in striving for this simplicity but this struggle must not be evident, I endeavour to ensure that the finished work demonstrates no hints of this.

The crafting of each book is extremely important and the process is an integral part of my creative practice. Each work requires continual testing through mock-ups and dummies. Particular choices of paper or other materials have important relevance – from a practical perspective they must be effective but they often also have qualities that enhance the work and add weight conceptually but that do not demand too much attention. They must sit quietly within the work as a whole and there is a careful balance to be struck here.

Place is key.

I was born and still live in Midlothian, which is just

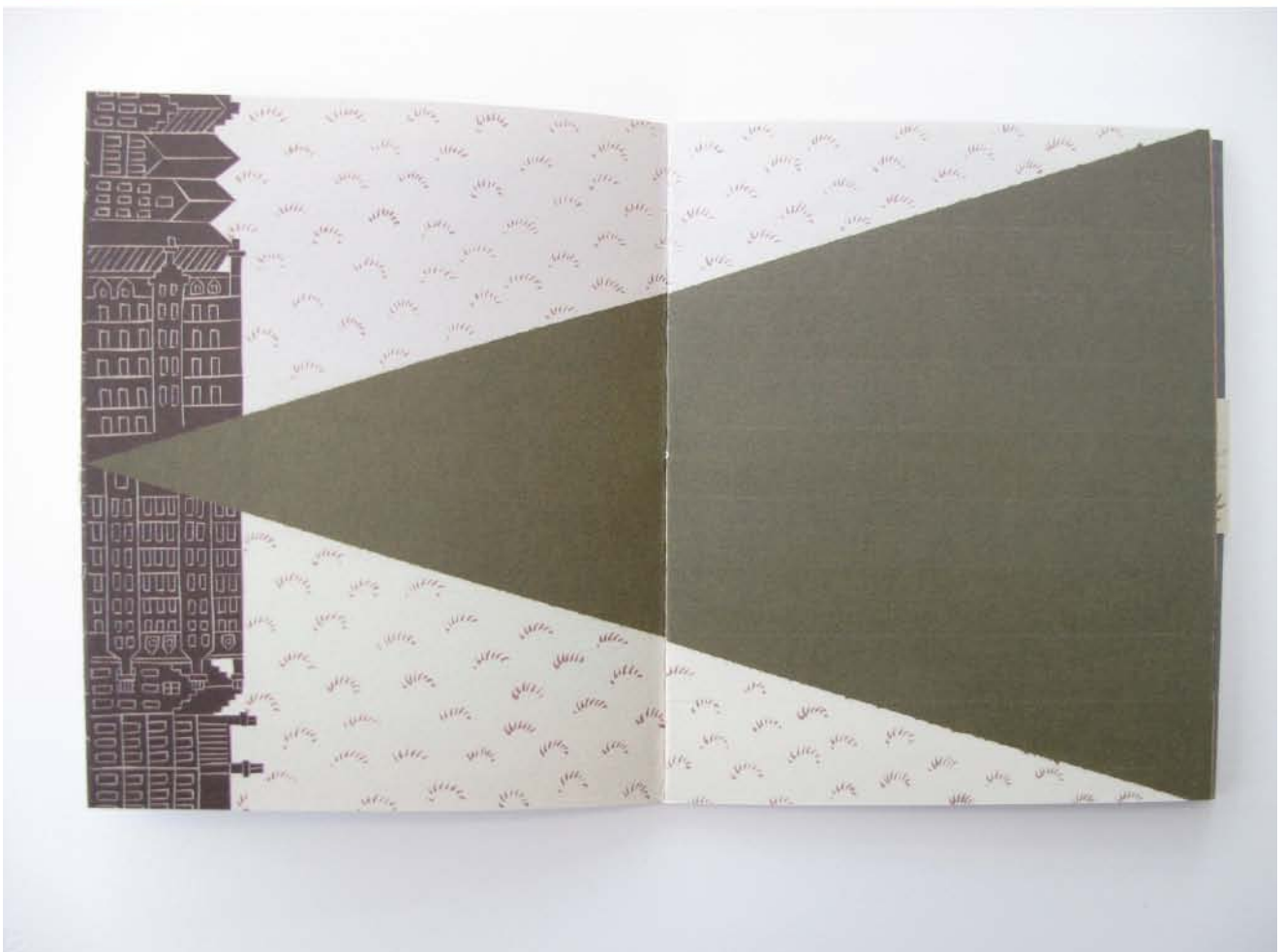
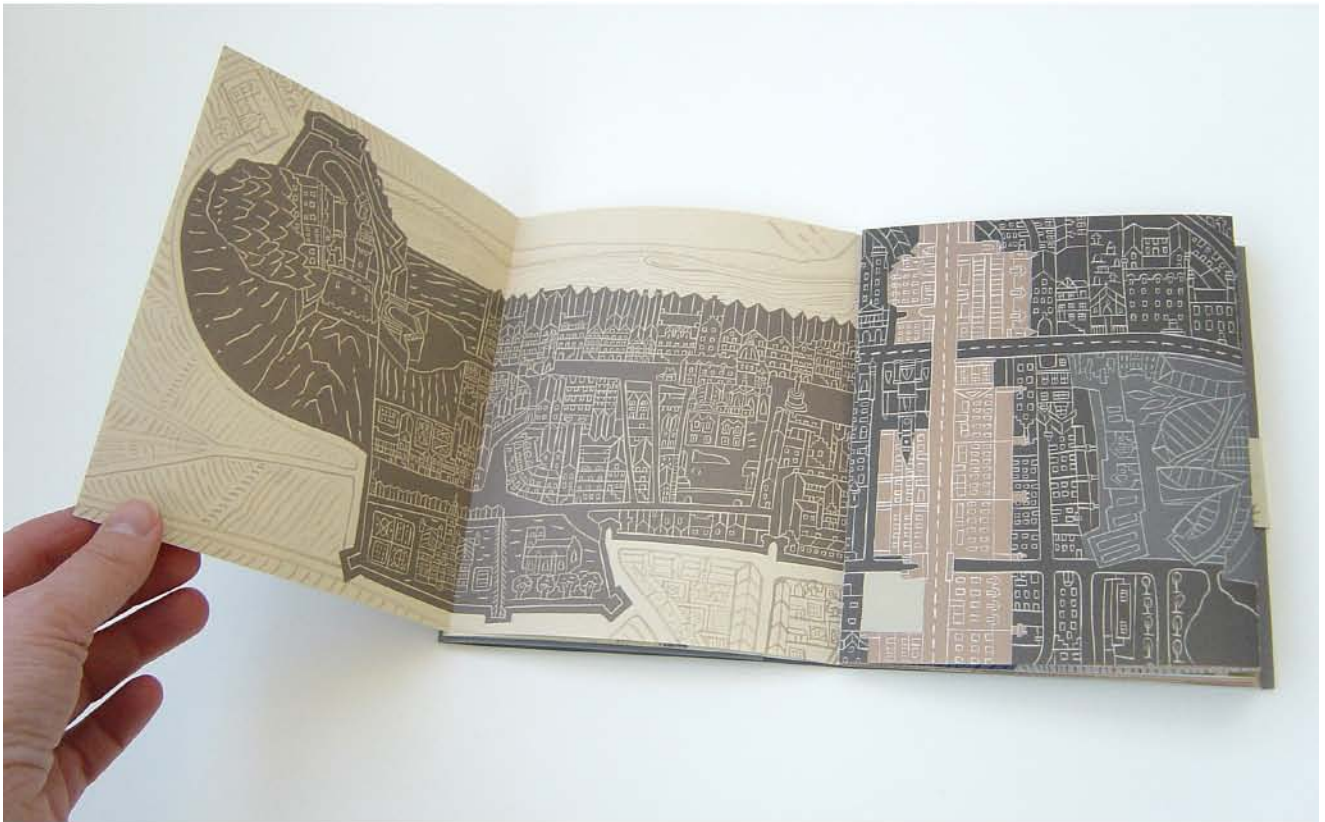
south of Edinburgh and this locality is at the heart of the work. It has a rich mix of history, mainly agricultural and industrial. I live less than a mile from Old Cockpen Church where many of my forebears are buried – families who worked the land and those who worked in the linen industry. It is almost impossible to imagine mills and villages on sites that now are wooded and overgrown. There are only tiny remnants of this industry that can be discovered in the woods by the South Esk, now a wild and idyllic setting. This reclamation of the land and the Scottish linen industry are themes that will re-emerge later.

There is a book in my shelves at home that I rediscovered relatively recently. It has a label pasted into the front cover stating that it was awarded to me in my penultimate year at Dalkeith High School on receiving first prize in Art and Geography. This underlines the enduring interest that I have held in these subjects and that remain at the forefront of my work. Perhaps I can describe myself as an artist geographer, I look at place, land use, social aspects and enjoy plans and diagrams. I sort and like to impart information via my work and this gives it a functionality that is satisfying to me. It must have an aesthetic appeal and purpose but the content is all-important.

An early book, *Wild Plants Collected in Midlothian* (fig 1) is key in demonstrating this. Throughout childhood I played in and around the disused railway at the back of my house, outside or in derelict buildings and in autumn picking brambles in the cuttings, enjoying nature in a man made setting.

This interest has endured and I have explored other post-industrial sites, the mines, all man-made hard and brutal. The sites themselves are fascinating but I became increasingly interested in the plants that re-inhabit these areas – the 'weeds'. *Wild Plants Collected in Midlothian* is a concertina book that depicts them in a continuous chronology across a year. It demonstrates a love of location, a fascination with plants as well as an urge to order, to organise and to understand. It literally gathers the visual information and makes it legible through that afore mentioned paring back and simplifying. Alongside this interest in the wild I am a gardener but one who finds it difficult to pull a weed – whether I find it pleasing in itself or I want to save it to draw at some later time. The idea of accepted and unwelcome plants is one that runs through my work.

Existing books and libraries also form invaluable source material. Clearly they are important in terms of research but I also explore formats, subtleties of binding, layouts and general book design that can have an impact on my finished works. For me, books really are an obsession.



(fig 4) Jane Hyslop, *Edinburgh, a visual handbook*, 2007, 15 x 12.5cm, four colour litho, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jane Hyslop



In my self-ascribed role of artist geographer I made a body of work in 2013 based in Dalkeith Estate, again a childhood playground of mine. Dalkeith had one of the earliest formal gardens in Scotland and *The Formal Garden at Dalkeith* (fig 2) demonstrates the impact existing volumes have. Its binding is inspired by the manner in which papers in the Buccleuch archive<sup>1</sup> are held in bundles. The book simply contrasts the complexity of the formal garden plan of 1690 with the blank sheet of green grass that now takes its place.

During the early 19th Century Dalkeith boasted the largest gardens in Scotland where a wide variety of produce was grown and a large workforce was employed. In E. H. M. Cox's book – *A History of Gardening in Scotland*<sup>2</sup> he mentions that women were employed to weed the gardens. I was interested to explore this social division – the women with the lowliest of tasks. I researched in the Buccleuch archive to discover these women's names and to afford them some recognition through a short series of books. I was appalled by the derisory manner in which they were listed on the wage slips, which led to the title of this series, *Sundry Persons for Weeding the Gardens* (fig 3).



(fig 3) Jane Hyslop, *Sundry Persons for Weeding the Gardens I, II and III*, 2013, 30 x 20.5 cm, screenprinted on Pescia Book and Murano papers, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jane Hyslop

Within these books are extracts from the lists of names of the women taken from their wage slips and quotes selected by Nicky Melville, writer, also from Dalkeith with whom I collaborated on this work. These quotes were selected from John Reid's book, *The Scots Gard'ner*<sup>3</sup> that has been important in this and other works. It was published in 1683 and it was the first book to be written specifically about gardening in Scotland. In *Sundry Persons for Weeding the Gardens* weeds are elevated into grand vessels that are based on elements taken from the architecture of the orangery in Dalkeith Estate, a rather grand edifice, now derelict. Instead of the names of the plants, which would normally be specimen

pieces, the names of some of the weeders are noted. Perhaps we can think of them as the 'flowers and the weeds'.

On the inside flap at the back of each of these books Nicky and I added further extracts from *The Scots Gard'ner* that describe aspects of plants and gardening but that can, when taken out of context and with only a small change of perspective be applied to the social position in which these women found themselves. For example: 'breeding and selection rarely practised in Scotland' and 'poor kinds so often found in old Scottish gardens.' (Reid, 1683: various)

#### *The Gardens | Edinburgh*

From Dalkeith one only needs to travel 7 miles north to find ones self in the heart of Edinburgh. In 2007 I published *Edinburgh, a visual handbook* (fig 4), an ambitious attempt to encapsulate Edinburgh's geological history, its flora and fauna and the city's architectural past and present in one small and concise volume. The paring back and testing that I mentioned earlier was vitally important here.

Within the book there are foldouts that reveal what exists currently and what lies underneath, literally or historically. The book divides the city into its three distinct parts, the Old Town, the New Town and the valley where The Nor Loch once lay and where Princes Street Gardens sit now. One of the linking pages in the book depicts the transition between the Old Town and The New Town that cuts through the valley – The Mound. This leads me to the first of the main projects *The Gardens | Edinburgh*.

I created this body of work when I was an invited artist at the 2015 annual exhibition of Visual Art Scotland (VAS). This organisation is currently developing a fresh identity for itself as one that promotes art and design in Scotland and questions the links between these areas. The exhibition is held in the Royal Scottish Academy Galleries (RSA) that lie at the foot of The Mound in the heart of Princes Street Gardens (fig 5) and I was eager to make work that related closely to this site.

I titled the work *The Gardens | Edinburgh* intentionally and not *Princes Street Gardens | Edinburgh* because locally that is how people refer to them, 'the gardens' and I wanted a complete emphasis on a sense of locality.

The Mound, mentioned earlier, now looks very much part of the surrounding landscape of the city but it is a relatively new addition. The Old Town is the original city of Edinburgh and it exploited its elevated position as a protection against attack.

During the construction of the New Town however The Mound was created to enable travel between the Old Town and the New Town. The Mound was made with



(fig 5) View of Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh.  
Photo: Jane Hyslop



Above: (fig 6) Jane Hyslop, *The Gardens I*, 2014-15, 15.5 x 31 x 9 cm,  
boxed set of items, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jack Luke

Below: (fig 7) Jane Hyslop, *The Gardens I*, 2014-15, 15.5 x 31 x 9 cm,  
boxed set of items, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jack Luke



the waste material taken from the excavations in the New Town and in 1781<sup>4</sup> was considered a disgrace and an eyesore. In its early incarnation it was simply referred to as the Earthen Mound.

When making the key piece of this series, *The Gardens I* (figs 6 & 7) I worked through several options in an endeavour to extend and expand the book and explore it in new ways ultimately creating a container that imitates the shape of The Mound – a wedge shaped box. Inadvertently I had re-visited the image from the linking image from *Edinburgh, a visual handbook* (fig 4). The grey coded colour of the Old Town at the spine, the green of the now grassed Mound and the sandy colour of the excavations for the New Town. This opens up to reveal a collection of objects, each relating to the gardens in some way.

As part of this work I was again interested in the plants in the garden and in particular the tension between the cultivated, accepted plants and the weeds. With this in mind the box contains a book of planting plans that refer back to John Reid's early plans of 1683.<sup>5</sup> Princes Street Garden is obviously much later but it maintains elements of that 17th century obsession with control and formality in its numerous flowerbeds and in the grandest of styles with the incredibly regimented and world famous floral clock.

For the orderly planting of flowers there may be three ways, as first in the Bordures of pleasure Gardens or Courts, plant 5 rowes in the bordure, and Intermixe them orderly i.e. divide and plant every sundry sort through the whole Garden at equal distances, and not only so but every colour thereof also; let never two of a kind nor two of a colour stand together.  
(Reid, 1683: 29)

The floral clock is represented in *1 hour*, a perforated paper segment, one 12th of a circle. This and the box expand on the idea of the book as a three dimensional object that contains meaning both literally and conceptually.

Despite all efforts on the part of the current gardeners, the gardens still boast plenty of weeds. For example, I discovered wonderful clumps of rosebay willowherb and individual specimens of a huge number of weeds fighting their way through tiny cracks in the paving or around the edges of the flowerbeds. I was keen to record some of these plants and each box contains an original drawing of a weed collected from the gardens.

The Nor Loch was drained to accommodate the gardens and the galleries where the VAS exhibition was held as well as the railway. A fragment of printed paper

represents the loch from an earlier print that I had made of the loch, a literal scrap of my print and a representation of the Nor Loch with topographical notation added.

Finally, *The Gardens I* (figs 6 & 7) contains a contents page that briefly explains each inclusion.

The series *The Gardens | Edinburgh* included several folios of drawings. *The Gardens* is a folio of large drawings explores in greater detail the infiltration of weeds into Princes Street Gardens. Collected specimens are rendered in gouache, drawn in a manner to accentuate their freshness, life and beauty. These are set against pencil drawn plans of elements of the formal layout of the gardens as they are currently designed and from historical references.

*Planting Plans for Scottish Gardens* (part of fig 8) explores the patterns and diagrams set out by John Reid<sup>6</sup> in a playful manner. I delighted in inventing possibilities around these rather abstract notations. The symbols that represent certain species are set out in a regimented manner and patterns are created and developed.



(fig 8) Jane Hyslop, *Diagrams for Weaving and Planting Plans for Scottish Gardens (with linen)*, 2015, 20 x 30.5 x 3 cm, folios of gouache and pencil drawings, Midlothian UK. Photo: Jack Luke

While these works consider the surroundings of the RSA Galleries, another aspect of the project analysed the history and purpose of the buildings themselves and their important role in the development of Scotland's economy, art and design education and culture.

In the early 18th century, the building housed Scotland's Board of Trustees for Manufacturers and Fisheries. They were tasked with improving the Scottish economy with a focus on the linen trade. They did this through supporting the industry but also by bringing a group of expert French weavers to Scotland to impart their skills and raise and refine the quality of Scottish linen.<sup>7</sup>

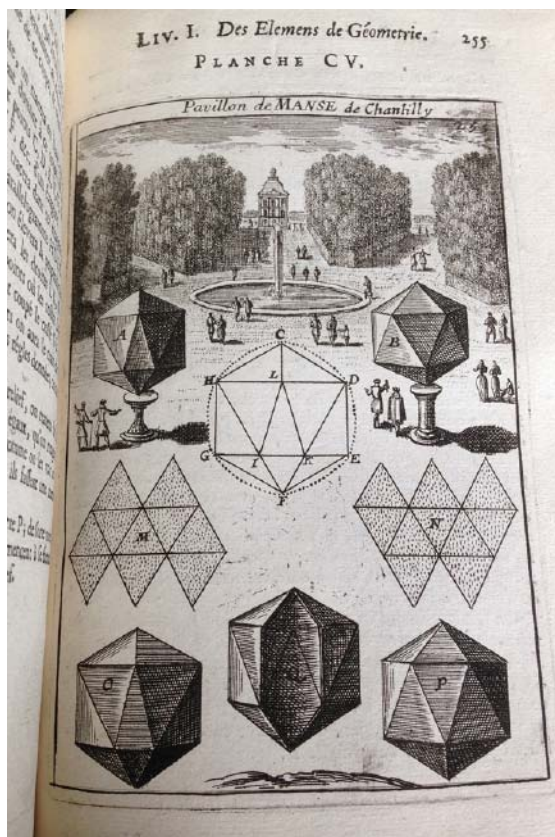




(fig 9) Jane Hyslop, *The Gardens* | Edinburgh, 2015, Installation shot, Visual Art Scotland annual exhibition 2015, RSA Galleries, Edinburgh. Photo: Jane Hyslop



(fig10) Traquair House, The Scottish Borders. Photo: Jane Hyslop



(fig 11) Illustrations from *La Géométrie Pratique*, Mallet, A. (1702) Anisson Directeur de l'Imprimerie Royale, Paris, France. Photo: Jane Hyslop





The main thrust of this development was commercial but it was soon appreciated that this could have further value and the Board set up the Scottish School of Design in 1760 and this was seen as 'the best means of ameliorating arts and manufactures in point of taste'. (Grant, 1882: Volume II, 86)

This move is at the heart of Scottish art and design education with the Royal Scottish Academy that later took up residence in the buildings opening its doors to art students which in turn lead to the establishment of Edinburgh College of Art in 1906.

To rely on a simple product to build commerce and raise aesthetic appreciation was ambitious and effective and other works were made as part of the series to reflect this. *Diagrams for Weaving* (part of fig 8) and *Scottish Linen, a story* highlight this core of activity that emanated from the very building where they were exhibited. *Diagrams for Weaving* (part of fig 8) is bound in Scottish linen woven by Peter Greig & Co Ltd,<sup>8</sup> the last remaining linen mill in Scotland, and contains a series of drawings that depict a range of patterns for weaving, each becoming more refined. *Scottish Linen, a story* is a book made from a series of natural linen pages of differing weights and refinement echoing the actions of The Board of Manufacturers. In its heart sits a bookmark, made with linen and with embroidered symbols taken from Edinburgh's Incorporation of Weavers coat of arms along with the name Nicholas d'Assaville who led the French weavers as they came to enlighten the Scots.<sup>9</sup>

*The Gardens | Edinburgh* was exhibited in the main gallery of the RSA in a series of bespoke cabinets that were designed to fit the work and the space and to allow these artists books to have a real presence in such an imposing space (fig 9). They sat at the core of the RSA Galleries that in turn sit at the heart of Princes Street Gardens and so this series of books and folios were situated completely in their place.

#### *La Géométrie Pratique*

Later in 2015 I was invited to contribute to an exhibition entitled *Curved Stream*<sup>10</sup> at Traquair House in the Scottish Borders (fig 10). I had undertaken a residency there not long after graduating and was keen to return with new perspectives.

Traquair is the oldest inhabited house in Scotland with a rich Jacobite history and a unique atmosphere. Eight artists were invited to install a piece of their work in the main house and to make an accompanying piece for one of two pavilions which are much more neutral spaces that stand in the garden on either side of the back of Traquair house.

When I first stayed at Traquair I was privileged to have access to the Old Library in the evenings. I discovered many treasures there and this is an abiding memory. I was eager to explore this library again and to find something there to stimulate work.

I soon came across a series of 4 volumes – *La Géométrie Pratique*, published in Paris in 1702.<sup>11</sup>

These chimed with John Reid's book in that *A Scots Gard'ner*<sup>12</sup> is underpinned with the setting out of land and gardens by careful measuring and creating diagrams. This slightly later series of books were packed with illustrations set out in the landscape, in gardens and around grand chateaux.

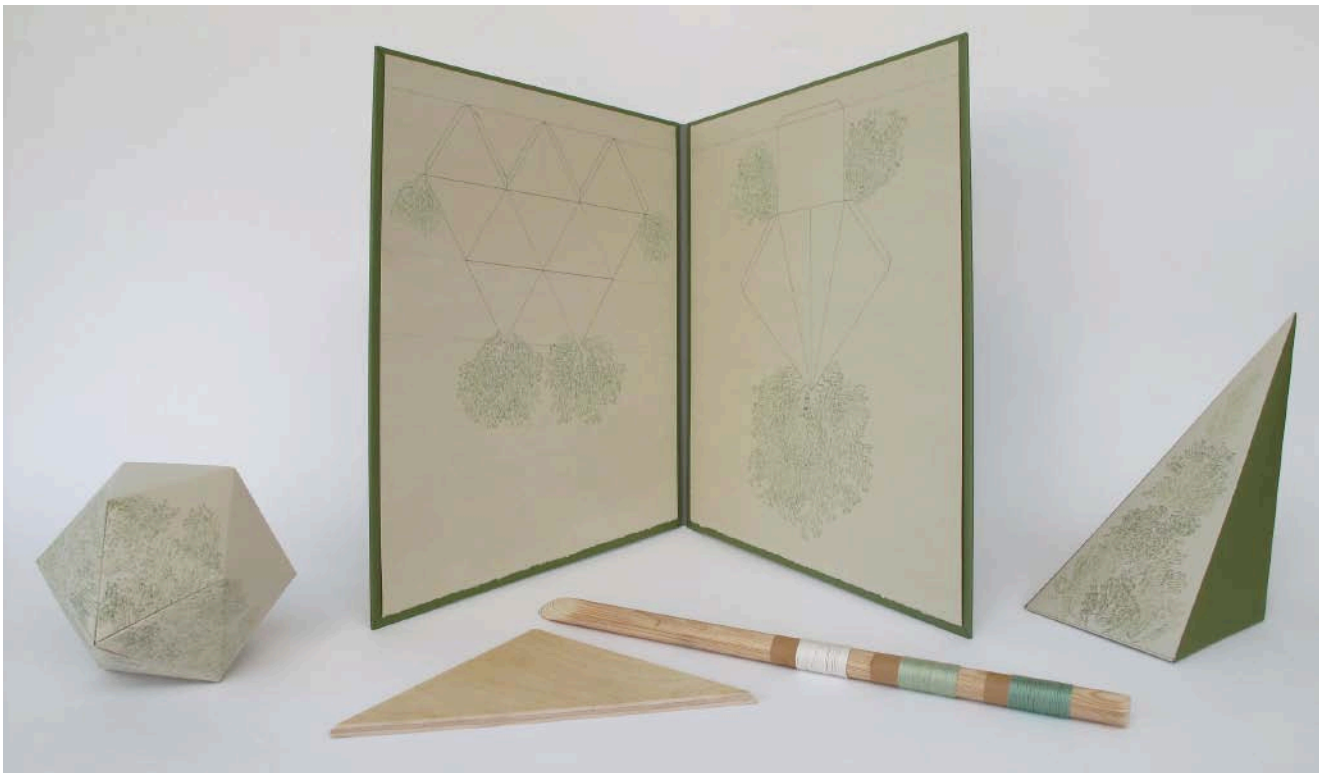
Much of the grandeur of Traquair's gardens is now lost but there is a legacy of formality to aspects of its gardens. As I sat in the library studying the images in *La Géométrie Pratique*<sup>13</sup> outside I could see the famous maze at Traquair, admittedly a relatively recent addition to the gardens but with resonances of formal gardens of the 17th and 18th centuries.

There were direct correlations between Traquair and the illustrations in the books and the idea of measuring and planning was illustrated in a rich and inspiring way throughout these volumes (fig 11). Geometric three-dimensional forms were described and set within the gardens and this linked with the wedge of The Mound in *The Gardens I* (fig 5). As a result, this offered a new way of thinking about the gardens at Traquair and on forms within them.

On an early visit to Traquair in spring 2015 I was attracted to the orchard of ancient apple trees in the walled garden that are adorned with lichens. These offered complex subject matters for drawing and they were embellishments to the structures of the trees – a notion that I later developed, taking elements of the original drawings and applying these to geometric, measured shapes.

I decided to install work on a table in the Old Library (fig12) where I had discovered the volumes that make up *La Géométrie Pratique*.<sup>14</sup> Visitors are not permitted to enter but can look into the library from the door so the challenge was to make a book that offered up its contents to the viewers and be visible at a short distance. Options were explored by looking at constructed table top lecterns but this was a clumsy solution that would have detracted from the book itself. Finally I created a folio that was cut at an angle on the bottom edge which was completely functional but that also made for an unusual object. This allowed the folio to stand and present the imagery to the viewer. (figs 12 & 13)

This work envisages the garden designer at Traquair referring to *La Géométrie Pratique*<sup>15</sup> while pondering plans for the gardens there. The drawings depict



diagrams for three-dimensional forms that were in turn installed in one of the pavilions. Beside the folio are imagined measuring devices based on the French pied de roi system that existed until the revolution and is used and described in the volumes.

In the pavilion the three dimensional forms were created in paper and were apparently solid but paradoxically fragile, with digital prints of drawings that were made of the apple tree lichens. Their own measuring device is to hand – a larger, rougher version than those in The Old Library to be used outside in the gardens to measure out land. Each shape was taken directly from *La Géométrie Pratique*<sup>16</sup> with reference to current features in the Traquair gardens. For example, one was adapted to fit with the proportions of a repeated element in the maze at Traquair.

These measuring devices resolve my creative ideology that starts with the subject matter and concludes with crafted objects that demand careful measuring and invite enquiry which creates a satisfying and complete relationship.

The two projects described in this article illustrate the traits of artist and geographer that reside within me. The artist endeavours through imagery to create links, to make accessible, engaging and effective works. The geographer aims to record, to analyse and convey information that is rooted in place, usually localities that have personal links and relevance. Underlying both of these aspirations is an ambition to be honest within the work and to explore the artist's book in my own particular way, questioning how the book form can engage the audience in a way that has distinct resonances in this digital age.

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## Notes

1. The Buccleuch Estate owns Dalkeith Estate and The Buccleuch archive that contains all the estate papers is held at New Register House, Edinburgh
2. *A History of Gardening in Scotland*, Cox, E.H.M. (1935) Chatto and Windus, London
3. *The Scots Gard'ner: Published for the Climate of Scotland*, Reid, J. (first published 1683, this edition 1988) Mainstream Publishing Company, Edinburgh, ISBN 1-85158-125-1
4. *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh, Volume II*, Grant, J. (1882) Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co., London, Paris, New York: 82
5. Reid, *The Scots Gard'ner: Published for the Climate of Scotland*
6. Ibid
7. Grant, *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh, Volume II*
8. Peter Greig and Co Ltd, Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland
9. Grant, *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh, Volume II* York: 84
10. <http://www.curvedstream.com>
11. *La Géométrie Pratique*, Mallet, A. (1702) Anisson Directeur de l'Imprimerie Royale, Paris, France
12. Reid, *The Scots Gard'ner: Published for the Climate of Scotland*
13. Mallet, *La Géométrie Pratique*
14. Ibid
15. Ibid
16. Ibid